

Stewardship and Conservation Tools Education Program

The Stewardship and Conservation Tools Education Program brings together landowners and public/private organizations working to steward natural lands in the Puget Sound region. These partners focus on undeveloped, habitat rich areas that provide multiple public benefits such as pollution and flood control, farm and forest resources, fish and wildlife habitat, and aesthetic value. Program partners educate private landowners about the variety of tools available for land stewardship,



focusing on non-regulatory, incentive-based programs. They provide guidance to help landowners understand the application requirements, consequences, and incentives associated with each option. Property owners are educated by means of brochures, workshops, and one-on-one site visits. Landowners with stewardship tools experience also inform their peers via presentations and testimonials.

Other audiences include WSU Extension volunteers and real estate agents who interact with property owners.

Program Goal:

- Educate landowners about the value of natural resource lands and the tools they can use to steward and conserve forests, farms, open space, and wildlife habitat.



Ellis conservation easement, Pierce County

Photo by Great Peninsula Conservancy

Stewardship and Conservation Tools partners have included¹:

- WSU Extension offices
- County governments (Planning, Natural Resource, and Tax Assessor Departments)
- Conservation Districts
- Land Trusts
- Fishery Enhancement Groups and other Non-profit organizations
- State agencies (Ecology, Natural Resource, and Fish/Wildlife)
- USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Tribal Organizations
- Puget Sound Action Team

¹ Programs have been delivered in King, Pierce, Jefferson, Island, Kitsap, Mason, and Snohomish Counties.

2002-2004 Achievements

6,600 landowners mailed information on conservation tool programs and contacts.

18 workshops (King, Pierce, Island, Jefferson, Snohomish County areas) attended by total of 338 landowners (8 workshops attended by 196 landowners in King County.)

21 King County landowner visits by WSU Extension personnel

109 acres of natural lands enrolled in conservation programs by landowners receiving direct program assistance (89 acres in King County.)

135 WSU Extension volunteers received conservation tools education as part of their stewardship training (57 volunteers in King County.)

94 Jefferson and Island County real estate agents received stewardship and conservation tools training.

2005 Milestones

4 workshops (Jefferson, Island, Mason and Pierce County areas) attended by total of 128 landowners.

10 WSU King County Extension volunteers received conservation tools education.

Conservation and Stewardship Tools web page developed that serves both landowners and government agencies conducting education outreach. Access site at <http://www.metrokc.gov/wsu-ce/conservation/>

Stewardship and Conservation Tools Education Program

Real Estate Agent Education

Stewardship and Conservation Tools Education has also been integrated into WSU Extension **Realtor Education programs**. Fourteen Jefferson County agents received training during fall 2003 and over 80 Island County agents received training in spring 2004. The agents learned about both regulatory and volunteer programs, ranging from shoreline buffers required by the Growth Management and Shoreline Management Acts, to tax incentives for lands voluntarily enrolled in open space and conservation easement programs. The goal of this effort is to facilitate the transfer of stewardship and conservation tools information from real estate agents to the large number of parcel owners and buyers with whom they interact.

So What Are Stewardship and Conservation Tools?

The Stewardship and Conservation Tools Education Program focuses on **non-regulatory, incentive-based programs**. These programs offer a range of opportunities for landowners to manage, conserve, and restore land. Examples of tools include:

- **Current Use Taxation:** County **Public Benefit Rating System** and **Timber Land** programs provide incentives that help landowners voluntarily conserve open space lands and/or manage for timber resources. Landowners can receive property tax reductions for preserving resources such as stream banks, wetlands, or wildlife habitat. Tax deductions are also available for landowners who implement **forest stewardship plans**. Similar programs are available for **Agricultural Land**.
- **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program:** Conservation Districts facilitate this federal-state partnership program that provides an opportunity for landowners to rent their streamside land under 10 or 15-year federal contracts. Up to 100 percent cost sharing is also available for tree and shrub planting.
- **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):** Under the **Wetland Reserve** or **Farm and Ranchland Protection Programs**, landowners can place eligible lands in a permanent or 30-year easement and receive financial compensation. Restoration cost-share agreements that pay up to 75 % of costs are also available. Two **Wildlife and Environmental Quality Incentives Programs** offer similar technical and financial assistance to landowners. A **Conservation Security Program** provides payments to farmers who implement conservation measures.
- **Land Trust Tools:** Land trusts are non-profit groups that can accept land with exceptional habitat value through donations or sales. Land trusts facilitate conservation easements, which can be used by landowners who want to permanently preserve the natural character of their land but maintain ownership, and qualify for local and federal tax deductions.
- **Forest Stewardship Tools:** A variety of forest stewardship tools are available, ranging from coached forest stewardship education, to technical assistance, cost share, timber easement purchase, and culvert replacement programs.
- **Grants:** A variety of federal, state, and local grant programs are available for private land stewardship.

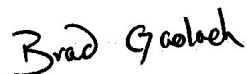
Stewardship Tools Directories and Land Conservation Options Brochures

Three documents have been created to increase landowner knowledge of stewardship and conservation tools. The documents address county-specific programs and people.

Developing a Conservation Strategy: This document provides a brief overview of the steps that a landowner can take to develop a conservation plan.

Stewardship Tools Directories: These directories list the programs and people offering assistance to landowners, ranging from payment, cost share, and tax incentive tools to technical and grant assistance programs.

A Summary of Land Conservation Options for Landowners in the Puget Sound Area: This 6-page brochure summarizes land conservation options and the organizations and people that offer them.



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